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A GREAT PRIVATE CITIZEN

HENRY LEE HIGGINSON

BY

M. A. DeWOLFE HOWE



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Portrait missing March, 24, 1921
B.D.

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I

HENRY LEE HIGGINSON, who died in Boston on November 14, 1919, personified to an extraordinary degree a quality in American citizenship for which the need was never greater than at the present moment. This was the quality of a patriot's idealism evoked in time of war and sustained to the very end of a long life. He was the embodied refutation of the doctrine, now proclaimed on many sides, that the war-time spirit of idealism is all very fine, but that it cannot be expected to endure. In him it did endure — in him and a few others, scattered throughout the country, who offered their lives in the physical struggle of the Civil War, yet found in it also a great spiritual adventure, from which they returned spiritually quickened for the rest of their days. The rigid realists can point to their tens of thousands, not so quickened, but rather hardened to make the most of every material opportunity that reared its head

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once war was put aside; and none can deny that such there were, in disheartening numbers. Such no doubt there will be again, in the new period on which we have entered. But a life like that of Major Higginson, ending on the threshold of this period, has something to say both of the past and of the future. What it meant to the young men of successive generations for whom he was an inspiring visible presence, his memory may still mean to the multitude of his countrymen who have now laid down their arms after the greatest of wars, and are confronted with the immediate danger of losing that generous spirit of idealism which it nourished in them. He did not lose this spirit — nor need they.

If Major Higginson, in respect of his sustained idealism, represented an exception to the general rule, he embodied also several obvious contradictions. His very title of 'Major' was one of them; he was in reality brevetted Lieutenant-Colonel, U.S.V., before the end of the war 'for gallant and meritorious services,' and might naturally have gone through life 'Colonel

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Higginson.' He was commonly designated 'the first citizen of Boston'—and so justly that no second citizen has stepped at once into his vacant place; but, not even a native of New England, he was born in New York, November 18, 1834. He was a preëminent son of Harvard, but studied at the University for less than a single year, the freshman year of the class of 1855. He was best known throughout the country as a patron of music and education, as the 'founder and sustainer' of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and a liberal benefactor of Harvard; he was a Puritan at heart, and in his daily life a hard-working, hard-headed man of affairs, deeply immersed in intensely practical matters, a member of an important financial firm, a director of powerful corporations. For approximately forty years he held a conspicuous place in the public eye; but he never held public office. It was as a private citizen, a great private citizen, that he did his far-reaching work for his community and his country.

Major Higginson was forty-seven years old when, in 1881, he established, out of

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resources acquired by his own industry and intelligence, not through inheritance, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and committed himself to maintaining it by means of resources still to be acquired on the same terms. This work lasted for thirty-seven years. It would have been an impossible task but for certain personal endowments, native and cultivated—courage, unselfishness, a capacity for public friendship, and a pervading sense of whimsical humor, that surest companion to a true sense of relative values. These gifts were not suddenly bestowed at the age of forty-seven. They grew out of his inheritances, his boyhood, and the maturing experiences of his earlier manhood.

The essential Puritan in him, that part of him which cried out against extravagance and waste, both public and private, and gave to his personal habits an austerity quite foreign to the households of modern American financiers, came to him direct from the earliest settlers of New England. His first American ancestor of his own name was the Reverend Francis Higginson, who came to Salem, Massachu-

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setts, in 1629. This Puritan divine had, in the words of Cotton Mather, 'a most charming voice, which rendered him unto his hearers, in all his exercises, another Ezekiel, for *Lo, he was unto them, as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well upon an instrument.*' This suggestion of music in a pioneer of bleak New England may be associated, by no overstraining of fancy, with his distant descendant.

The generations between the Salem minister and Major Higginson's father, George Higginson, were constantly fed from the streams of Massachusetts blood and tradition. To cite these tributaries would be to make a catalogue of family names intimately associated with the civil and religious direction of New England. It is enough to say here that in his father Major Higginson had a friend and exemplar who definitely affected the course of his life. George Higginson's early mercantile ventures in New York came to grief in the financial disturbances of 1837. He then came to Boston, where in 1848 he formed, with his cousin, John C. Lee, the

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stock-brokerage firm of Lee & Higginson. It was a day of comparatively small things, and George Higginson never owned a house or a horse of his own until within a few years of his death in 1889. But he gave his children, four sons and a daughter, all that the time and place afforded in the way of education, and set them a high standard of helpfulness and integrity. One day a business friend, irritated by some misconception, walked into his office and said, 'Mr. Higginson, I always supposed you were an honest man.' 'No, you did not,' was the answer; 'you knew it.' Taking such facts for granted, and a constant readiness to do things for others, were thus bred in the bone of his son Henry.

When he was a boy at the Boston Latin School, he took his part with a fierce energy in the snowball fights on Boston Common. Henry Adams, in his *Education*, recalls the battles between the Latin School boys and all comers on the Common, the trick of inserting stones in snowballs, and his own depression one day at 'seeing one of his trustiest leaders, Henry Higginson — "Bully Hig," his school

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name—struck by a stone over the eye, and led off the field bleeding in rather a ghastly manner.’

His college career was cut short before the end of one year by a weakness of his eyes. This did not disqualify him for business, and for several years he was employed in the counting-house of S. & E. Austin, a well-known firm of Boston merchants. But ‘Trade,’ as he wrote from Europe to his father in 1857, ‘was not satisfying to the inner man as a life-occupation.’ Having gone abroad, in 1856, without definite plans, he soon found himself bent on the serious study of music. ‘If I find that I am not profiting at all by my work,’ he wrote to his father, ‘I shall throw it up and go home. If I gain something, I shall stick to it. You will ask, “What is to come of it all if successful?” I do not know. But this is clear. I have then improved my own powers, which is every man’s duty. I have a resource to which I can always turn with delight, however the world may go with me. I am so much the stronger, the wider, the wiser, the better for my duties

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in life. I can then go with satisfaction to my business, knowing my resource at the end of the day. It is already made, and has only to be used and it will grow. Finally, it is my province in education, and having cultivated myself in it, I am fully prepared to teach others in it. Education is the object of man, and it seems to me the duty of us all to help in it, each according to his means and in his sphere. . . . And now, old daddy, I hope you will be able to make something out of this long letter. You should not have been troubled with it, but I thought you would prefer to know all about it. It is only carrying out your own darling idea of making an imperishable capital in education. My money may fly away; my knowledge cannot. One belongs to the world, the other to me.'

These were thoughtful and prophetic words to proceed from a youth of twenty-three. A letter written to his father in the same year contains another significant bit of self-revelation: 'What is money good for, if not to spend for one's friends and to help them? You've done so all

your life—let me do so too, when I can, for it is in me (I have always known it) to be a close man, a miser. I know about this.'

For about four years the young man remained in Europe, at first preparing himself,—chiefly in Vienna,—by hard study of the piano, singing, and composition, for such possibilities as a musical career might open to him, and afterwards adjusting himself to the necessity of abandoning it. This was the direct result of over-exertion. A headache that lasted for three days drove him to a barber, who let blood from his left arm to relieve his suffering. He returned to his piano practice too soon after this experience, and disabled his arm, as an eminent physician assured him, permanently. 'I came home,' he wrote, 'and swore like a pirate for a day; then, coming to my senses, I decided to sing away, study composition, etc., hard, magnetize, and await the result. . . . I've hurt myself many times by doing things which other people avoid as a matter of course.'

While reconciling himself to his disable-

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ment, and to a growing realization that his musical gifts were not such as to make him a musician of the first order, he supplemented his personal economies by giving lessons in English. Some months before returning to America in November of 1860, he wrote to his father, who must have wondered at his protracted absence from home, confessing the disappointment he had met, and adding, 'If you consider the whole thing and remember that I enjoy in the depths of my soul music as nothing else, you'll easily comprehend my stay.'

Long afterwards, when the orchestra he founded had been established in Boston for more than twenty-five years, he wrote to an old friend who had advised him wisely at its origin, a letter which confirmed the modest estimate he had made of himself as a musical student in Vienna, and at the same time revealed, in his words about Beethoven's Third Symphony, an appreciation of music, and a response to its appeal, which were a life-long justification of his early studies. Thus, in part, the letter runs:

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‘A few words about our talk last night. Of course I loved music, and therefore studied it—and found no talent whatsoever.

‘We young folks used to consider the problems of life, and the rights and needs of men and women, and the injustices of both, also the need of refreshment and not of luxuries or even comforts. And it seemed to me that we of the young beautiful country should and could have music of the best. Hence my hopes and efforts, both for the sake of art and the sake of humanity. Do you see? But talent, or even keen perception of musical talent in others, I have little or none; nor have I ever found talent for anything, except power of work, and of recognizing friends of the best, and the enormous value of them to me. It is all second or third class, and I’ve been built up and lifted up to a wrong place by friends.

‘As to the “Eroica,” I had meant to tell you how I felt about it, but it opens the flood-gates, and I can’t. The wail of grief, and then the sympathy which should comfort the sufferer. The won-

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derful funeral dirge, so solemn, so full, so deep, so splendid, and always with courage and comfort. The delightful march home from the grave in the *scherzo*—the wild Hungarian, almost gypsy in tone—and then the climax of the melody, where the gates of Heaven open, and we see the angels singing and reaching their hands to us with perfect welcome. No words are of any avail, and never does that passage of entire relief and joy come to me without tears—and I wait for it through life, and hear it, and wonder.’

The dreams of youth and the realities of old age—for Major Higginson was nearly seventy-five when he wrote this letter—have not often stood in a closer relationship.

II

When he returned to the United States late in 1860, realities were soon to supersede the dreams. Within six months Sumter was to fall, and the mettle of individual Americans to be tried. Henry Higginson met the test by immediate participation in the forming of the Second Massachusetts Regiment of Infantry, begun April 18, 1861. A remarkable group of young men joined in this undertaking, and became officers of the regiment. The name of Robert Gould Shaw typifies the quality of them all. It was a band of chosen spirits, aflame with the ideals for which a war is most nobly fought; and it was entirely characteristic of Henry Higginson that his friendship with these men entered into the very warp and woof of his army life, and permanently influenced him. A passionate devotion to his country may fairly be counted the controlling motive of all his years. With it was inextricably interwoven a passionate devotion to

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friends. Indeed, he seems to have conceived virtually all the relations of life in terms of friendship. In his attitude toward his country, his city, his college, even toward the art of music, there was something intensely personal—just as there was in his dealings with individual men and women. It was in blended patriotism and friendship that he made his two chief gifts to Harvard College—the Soldiers Field for athletic games, the Harvard Union for social intercourse. He set up on Soldiers Field the names of six soldier friends, and said about them to the students of Harvard College:—

‘Now, what do the lives of our friends teach us? Surely the beauty and the holiness of work and of utter, unselfish, thoughtful devotion to the right cause, to our country, and to mankind. It is well for us all, for you and for the boys of future days, to remember such deeds and such lives and to ponder on them. These men loved study and work, and loved play too. They delighted in athletic games, and would have used this field, which is now given to the College and to you, for

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your health and recreation. But my chief hope in regard to it is, that it will help to make you full-grown, well-developed men, able and ready to do good work of all kinds — steadfastly, devotedly, thoughtfully; and that it will remind you of the reasons for living, and of your own duties as men and citizens of the Republic.'

An older man does not wholly improvise thoughts of this kind. He brings them out of an experience like war because he takes a great deal into it. As a young officer Henry Higginson took into the war a full measure of enthusiasm and energy. He worked hard at recruiting and drilling his men before they went to the front. They recognized a fighter in him, and liked him. One day he overheard a soldier swearing in the ranks, and checked him, saying, 'If there is any swearing to be done in this company, I will attend to it.' No doubt he did, and by means of the vigor it implied stiffened the discipline for which he was responsible. Talking to some college students in 1913 about discipline in the army, he said, —

'One incident of the time showed the

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power of obedience which our men had learned. One afternoon, as the regiment came in from drill, I, being on guard, noticed a man who was talking and talking. I knew he was a blackguard, having noted him before. In a few moments he was sent down by his captain to the guard-house, to be kept there until he was sober. I said to the corporal, "Get the man's knapsack and rifle and bring him here." (In those days we expected an attack, and our rifles were kept loaded.) The man was brought back and told to march up and down. The guard-tents were in a row, and the muskets stacked about fifteen yards from the officers' tents, where I stood. The man marched up and came back, clubbed his musket, and told me he would like to knock my head off. "No matter," said I, "march on." (We had taken the cap off his rifle in order that he should do no harm.) He marched up and down once or twice, and then stopped where the rifles were stacked, took a percussion-cap out of his pocket, put it on the rifle, and took a good aim at my belt, and used queer language about a "hole in my

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body.” There was not much chance for me, for if he had fired, I should not be here talking to you. All I said was, “Bring that piece to your shoulder!” and he brought his rifle up to his shoulder; and then I said, “March on!” and he marched up to where I was. Then the sergeant took charge of him, unloaded his rifle, and the man marched until he dropped from fatigue. He was a miserable soldier, and about ten years ago I saw him in Charles Street coming out of a rumshop.’

While the young officer was imparting discipline after this fashion, he was also acquiring his own experience of it. The infantry regiment he had joined at its inception went to the front in July, 1861, when he was promoted from second to first lieutenant. In October he was transferred from the Second Massachusetts Infantry to the First Massachusetts Cavalry, formed in September, and received a captain’s commission. In his brief infantry experience he saw no battle, but was much engrossed in the routine duties of soldiering. With the cavalry, which had by degrees to disprove its inferiority to the

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mounted forces of the Confederacy, his fighting began. It continued through the Antietam campaign, in the autumn of 1862, through the winter months before Fredericksburg, and the spring campaign of 1863 in Virginia. On June 17 it came to an end, at the beginning of the battle of Aldie, when Major Higginson, sent to recall a fellow officer, Captain Sargent, who had gone beyond the point to which he had been ordered to advance, followed him, in the zest of an unexpected fight, and found himself and his men overpowered by superior numbers. His horse was shot under him, and in the hand-to-hand encounter that ensued he was wounded by pistol-shot and sabre-cuts, one of which left a scar on his face for life. When he recovered consciousness, he contrived to save himself from capture, but the wounds he had received incapacitated him from any further active service. As soon as he could do anything, he made himself useful again in recruiting, and for a brief time served on the staff of General Francis C. Barlow.

He would himself have been the first to

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say that his war-record was not exceptional. The passionate spirit of patriotism in which it was rendered, and his communion in that spirit with noble young contemporaries, many of whom gave their lives for the Union cause, left their indelible marks upon his character. Like many another fighter against disunion, he gave to the reunited country in its entirety the same devotion through life that he had given to the cause of the North in his earlier years, and again and again spoke of the men against whom he had fought as only a chivalrous foe could speak.

An incident of later years, related by one of his business partners, is significant. A Confederate officer nearly eighty years of age came into the firm's office one day, and said he would like to shake hands with Major Higginson. He was asked to sit down and await the major's return, which was expected at any moment. While waiting, the visitor, subject to an old heart trouble, fainted away, and was carried to an inner room where restoratives were bringing him back to consciousness when Major Higginson returned.

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‘What’s the trouble? Who is that?’ he asked.

‘Colonel —, Confederate officer in the Civil War. He came in to see you.’

Mr. Higginson stepped forward, leaned over the old man as he opened his eyes, and said, ‘I am sorry, colonel; but there’s one good thing—you can’t die here. This is an Abolitionist’s office.’

A flickering smile was the visitor’s reply, soon followed by his sitting up and entering into conversation. Before long the two old men left the office arm in arm, and the Southern colonel was heard to say, ‘You certainly did put my trolley on the wire to-day, major!’

Still another story illustrates the quizzical humor that was quite his own and accompanied him into all surroundings. He was discussing truth-telling one day with a younger associate. ‘It is essential in business,’ he is quoted as declaring, ‘but socially it is very diverting to lie. For instance, I was standing on the corner of Park and Tremont Streets the other day when a motor came down the hill, locked wheels with another, and turned over. In

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a moment a crowd was buzzing round; it was just like kicking a hornet's nest. A lady came by—uncertain of age, nondescript clothes, flat heels, carrying a bag—you know the type, you see them in Boston. Addressing no particular person, she said as she passed me, "Anybody hurt? Anybody hurt?"

'Very politely I replied with a bow, "I hope so, madam."

'She looked at me sharply, and discovering that I was old and gray and probably deaf, she repeated the inquiry in a louder tone. "Yes, madam, I heard the first time; I said, I hope so; think how disappointed all the people would be if nobody were hurt."

'Murmuring, "What a wretched, wicked old man!" she walked on about ten feet; then, turning, she came back, and scrutinizing me closely, said, "Aren't you Mr. Higginson?" "No, madam." "You look very much like him." "I have been told so." I lifted my hat and bowed most politely as the lady walked away in a quandary.'

The twinkling look that went with

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words like these, never deceiving the quick-witted for more than a moment, cannot be reproduced in any telling of the anecdote.

Such chaffing of a woman encountered by chance was characteristic of him in all his social relations. But of women in general, and especially of their high place in the true partnership between man and wife, he was the unfailing champion. His own marriage, with a daughter of Louis Agassiz, about six months after his disabling fight at Aldie, placed him in a rarely harmonious domestic relation which to the end of his days afforded the basis of happiness, sympathy, and coöperation in which all his other relations were rooted. Through this marriage, moreover, his intimacy with his brother-in-law, Alexander Agassiz, his classmate in college, became so close as to count among the positive influences of his life, with notable results both in affairs and in thought.

Yet it was from his comrades in arms that the incentives to the citizenship he practised were primarily derived. Even before the war one of them, Charles Russell

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Lowell, a kinsman with whom he was in the closest sympathy, had revealed in a letter to their common friend, John C. Bancroft, son of the historian, the attitude toward life which their little circle of idealists was taking. 'Last February,' he wrote from Rome in 1857, 'when Henry [Higginson] joined me in Florence, we laid our heads together to get you across the water; as a preliminary standpoint we concocted an extensive plan of migration, you and Jim Savage and Henry and I were all to move to Virginia or somewhere—we were to cultivate the vine and the olive, to think none but high thoughts, to speak none but weighty words, and to become, in short, the worthies of our age.'

After they had 'moved to Virginia' several years later, for a purpose then quite unforeseen, the future took on a new aspect, and Lowell, who had discovered 'a thorough born merchant' in his friend Higginson while they were traveling as youths together in Europe, wrote to him in the last year of the war, 'I hope, Mr. Higginson, that you are going to live like a plain Republican, mindful of the beauty

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and the duty of simplicity. Nothing fancy now, Sir, if you please. . . . I hope you have outgrown all foolish ambitions and are now content to become a "useful citizen." . . . Don't grow rich; if you once begin, you will find it much more difficult to be a useful citizen.'

The attempts to attain independence were at first unsuccessful, both in an oil-venture in Ohio and in a cotton-planting enterprise in Georgia, an experiment in which a patriotic motive played an important part. With his joining the firm of Lee, Higginson & Co., in Boston, in 1868, more prosperous days began to dawn; but it was only after thirteen years of hard, self-denying work that he found himself in a position to carry out a purpose he had long been forming, the establishment and maintenance of a great orchestra which should give to the people of his own city and country music of the same supreme order of merit as that which had nourished his spirit as a young man in Europe. This was essentially a patriotic purpose, conceived in the desire to enrich the life of his own beloved country. Music, as he had

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long before written to his father from Europe, was his province in education. Long afterwards he quoted the words that Fanny Kemble had once spoken to him: 'Life in the United States is hard and dry. Your country is a great cornfield. See that you plant flowers in it.' Still later he amplified the same thought in saying, 'This beautiful land is our workshop, our playground, our garden, our home; and we can have no more urgent or pleasant task than to keep our workshop busy and content, our playground bright and gay, our garden well tilled and full of flowers and fruits, our home happy and pure.' It was precisely for these objects that he established the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1881.

III

At that time public benefactions of this general nature were far less familiar than they have since become, and such a benefaction in the realm of music was wholly original. The endowed or privately supported orchestra is now an accepted institution in many American cities, and this is so in large measure because of the pioneering example set by Mr. Higginson. The value of that example lay by no means only in the spectacle of large annual expenditures, the fruit of annual earnings and income which might otherwise have been employed in the rolling up of a modern fortune, but also in the devotion of personal energies to an immensely difficult and complicated task. How exacting this task was, — in the selection and judicious handling of conductors, to say nothing of the whole company of highly temperamental persons who constitute the orchestra; in dealing with the *genus irritabile* of soloists and with a public sometimes only

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a little less difficult,—few could realize. Humor, patience, a decisive will, an infinite desire to serve his generation carried him over many rough patches of the long road. At the very end of it, when he had carried on this work with increasing success for thirty-seven years, the tensivity of war-time feeling and the sorrow that came from clinging too long to the trust he had placed in one who proved unworthy of it, imposed a burden he could no longer bear, and, broken by the bitter experience, he committed to other hands the institution he had created. But on the very last day of his life he found occasion to deplore the course of a contemporary who had recently bequeathed a great fortune to a worthy object, on the ground that his wealth might have been doing good through many years of its accumulation, and to pity him for having missed all the fun of spending it for others.

When Mr. Higginson wrote an article, 'A Word to the Rich,' for the *Atlantic* nine years ago, he began and ended it with this quotation from the gravestone of Edward Courtenay, Earl of Devonshire:—

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What we gave, we have;
What we spent, we had;
What we left, we lost.

There was his whole philosophy of riches. His practice was itself a hint to the rich, for his constant refusal to count the cost in what he did for others was offset at every turn by the little severities he imposed upon his own mode of life. 'I look at fifty cents myself,' he wrote in a private letter soon after the war broke out in Europe, 'and think whether I will take a carriage or walk. Indeed I nearly missed my train on Sunday because I did not take a carriage. There is something about "the spigot and the bung" that applies to everybody.'

Personal indulgence of any kind was as alien to him as to his Puritan forebears. 'Puritanism!' he wrote to a friend in 1889; 'the older I grow, the more I incline to their ideal, and the luxury and the wastefulness and a thousand things send me that way—in thought, though hardly in deeds and living perhaps.' It could not have been entirely from the Puritans of tradition that he derived, for example, his in-

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terest in schemes of profit-sharing. It was a cardinal principle of his economic creed that the wage-earner should have 'a larger piece of the pie.' The same sympathy which prompted this feeling kept him youthful to the last, drew him and his young associates, in business and friendship, together, and placed him constantly with those whose eyes were turned toward the sunrise.

His personal presence truthfully bespoke the man within. Compact of stature, visaged with distinction, military in bearing, alert and vigorous, forthright and staccato of speech, both in public and in private, he visibly embodied the qualities of utter fearlessness and honesty, joined with a fortunate capacity for quick and righteous anger. These qualities, moreover, were not wholly unrelated to a human and endearing tendency to make impulsive mistakes. But they stood in an equally close relation to a definite gift for bestowing and winning affection. To a remarkable degree his letters spoke with his living voice. Nothing of good or evil fortune could befall his friends without his writing to

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them, briefly or at length, in terms appropriately compact of sympathy and humor. His good letters were not the product of accident, for he had a theory of letter-writing which he once communicated to a business associate as follows: 'You sit down and visualize the person you are addressing; you dictate exactly as if he were present; you watch the changes in his face and anticipate his replies. You go through it and cut out all the adjectives and adverbs; then you probably have a good letter.' A point of his own practice is not enumerated here—namely, the addition of a postscript in long hand, to almost every type-written letter, making it even more personal than it was before.

Major Higginson's letters will long continue to speak, with authentic inflection, for the man himself, to all who may read them. In this place a single letter published twenty years ago in Dr. A. V. G. Allen's *Life of Phillips Brooks* will surely not be unwelcome to readers who have seen it before; to them and to others it will carry a clear suggestion of the personal quality of its writer—not a churchman,

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or a regular church-goer himself, but a holder of the simple faith that 'without God the bottom drops out of everything.' It needs only to be said that the letter was written to Phillips Brooks, his school and college classmate, at the time when he was considering an urgent call to quit his work at Trinity Church, Boston, and become preacher to Harvard University, from which any call came to either of these two friends, these devoted sons of the college, almost as a command: —

BOSTON, *April 12, 1881.*

DEAR OLD CHAP, —

Forty years is it since we began learning Latin and mischief together — you the Latin and I the mischief? Since which we have never had a cross word, and so I will run the chance of one by impertinence.

Folks say that the College is asking for you; and it is true, I know. Since you took your course for life, you have gone on steadily and enthusiastically until you've won a great place. Just think of the empty old church and of the present full church! Just think of the men and women of the intelligent and educated classes whom you've drawn into your fold! Think what these men will do for the less fortunate people of our

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city, and still more, think how your women work! We have not seen the like for a great, great while. It has fallen to you to do this thing, and I will not pass on your deserts, but merely on your luck to have done something in this life worth doing. Is not that what we all are after, and what goes far to save us from remorse or despair? How can a chap be content for a day, unless he is aiming at something of a serious kind? It is the only theory on which one can explain this life, is n't it? And how many of our comrades have made a success of their lives? or how often does it occur in our experience to see it?

You have — no matter how or why; and still more, the future for you is greater in promise than the past has been in performance. Don't dream of leaving your own field. Your personal contact with all these folks is a necessity, if you will go on. How can you then think of Cambridge and the dear old University? You can't work on those boys in the same way, simply because they are at the questioning, critical, restless age. The worst of them are not bad, but frivolous or idle-minded. The best of them are seeking for the truth everywhere, and had better seek by themselves. Let them ferment. Of course you can help many a restless spirit, when he *wishes* to be helped — but you can do it as well here as at Cambridge. You certainly can talk to or preach to or teach them at Cambridge occasionally — as in Boston. But, for Heaven's sake, don't leave

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your stronghold for this new field. It would be the mistake of your life — and you will rue it deeply and forever.

Now how do I know? I do not know, and yet I feel absolutely sure of it. I've talked to some of the middle-aged and some of the younger folk of it, and listened with much interest — to but one reply.

You know that personally I get nothing from your being in town. We both are too busy to meet often unless at church; and there I do not go. So I am free from bias. But I can't but feel much interested in your work, and glad of your great influence. Don't risk losing it — don't go away until your sun sets.

This letter calls for no reply. If it annoys you, burn it and forgive me for the sake of old times. I know that it is presuming, impertinent, arrogant even. It has not one word of praise or admiration for you. Such a word is not called for or needed, but no one can value work and enthusiasm more than I. You know full well how I feel about your life.

God bless you, old fellow.

HENRY L. HIGGINSON.

There is much, very much more that might be said and quoted. From the many fields of activity of this great private citizen — fields of business, education, art, friendship, and public service privately

A GREAT PRIVATE CITIZEN

rendered—instances innumerable might be drawn to illustrate the living out of his avowed belief that ‘there seems no other outcome, no other foundation for a happy mankind, for civilization, than a full, generous, wise use of our powers for the good of our fellow men, and a happy forgetfulness of ourselves.’ But this is far less a memoir than a suggestion, a turning of consideration to the immediate meaning of such a life as Major Higginson’s.

When the eighty-fifth birthday he did not quite attain was drawing near, and some observance of it had been proposed to him, he wrote to a friend: ‘I’ve had only too many kind words of praise for doing my duty, and only my duty, as my eyes and those of dear, dead friends saw it. The simple tale—that he tried to fill up gaps and sought to bring sunshine into the lives of his fellow men and women, that he usually kept his word, given and implied, and that he worshipped his country and had the very best and most far-seeing of friends—is the whole story.’

Thus in retrospect he saw his life. To others it may stand preëminently, as these

HENRY LEE HIGGINSON

pages began by suggesting, for the possibility of sustaining from youth to old age an idealism born in time of war. This central meaning of it was richly symbolized at his burial. Into and out of the academic surroundings of a college chapel the veteran soldier, the indomitable lover of righteousness and beauty, was borne in the uniform of his army days, his sword at his side; and over his grave the 'grieving bugle' sounded its martial note of farewell. For his country and its ideals he enlisted in the war of more than half a century ago. The enlistment proved to be for life. He believed with all his heart that the young men of this later day were the true spiritual sons of their fathers. It is for them, in the light of such a life as his, to justify this faith of the older generation.

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